



## South Dakota Department of the Military South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



### MESSAGE FROM SDDVA SECRETARY ZIMMERMAN

Spring is in the air and my wife is in "Operation Spring Cleaning" mode. She knows better than to give me a "to do" list because I get distracted by things like polishing the motor cycle, polishing the golf clubs, scrubbing the grill, and organizing my flip flops and Bermuda's. Perhaps, that is my own form of spring cleaning!

No matter what appears on your spring cleaning "to do" list, please add "thank my veterans." Spring is a good time to refresh our support for our veterans.

Flowers budding, grass greening, and trees leafing out are visible. Veterans are camouflaged in civilian clothes and are not visible. Seek out veterans at work, in your neighborhood, at church, at your local restaurant, etc. Give them words of encouragement and tell them thank you. Let them know you are grateful for the sacrifices for the freedom and liberty that you enjoy.

Our veterans have fought two wars - one on the battlefield and one in their souls after they return home. Let's help these men and women forget the nightmare of war. Give these veterans a word of encouragement. Let them know their dedication to excellence, their discipline and their integrity are appreciated.

Fishing on the river, attending church, visiting a library, writing letters to the editor, sending our children to school are freedoms we enjoy because of the men and women who donned the uniform and served this great country.

To all the men and women who have served our country, thank you and Happy Spring!

#### *Inside this issue:*

SDNG Biathlon Team	2
SDNG, Suriname Conduct Training	3
Boots to Business	4
Red Shirt Friday	5
Hot Springs Fire	6
NCAA Veterans Night	6
Beadle County Hosts Benefit Forum	7
VABHHCS VSO Congressional Forum	7
Funeral Planning Form	7
VA Care Call Center	8
AL Post 15 Birthday	8
Upcoming Events	9

*Spring is in the Air*

## SDNG BIATHLON TEAM CHASES THE PERFECT RACE

The South Dakota National Guard biathlon team comes together once a year to race in the Chief of the National Guard Bureau Biathlon Championships. They come for the fun and the challenge, and the 2016 competition, held Feb. 28 - March 3, offered plenty of both at Camp Ripley, Minnesota.

It was only the first day of racing, but by then most teams had already had their share of suffering. Warm temperatures and sunshine had taken a toll on the 12.5 km course, turning the already thin snow into a mix of slush and mud that barely held up under the skis of more than 100 competitors from 30 states.

The 10-person South Dakota team all said the same things about the course. Gaining speed was difficult. Maintaining it was next to impossible. And a low but unpredictable wind blew just strongly enough to make accurately firing a small .22-caliber rifle maddening.

For those not racing, the unseasonably warm weather may have felt like an early spring. Chief Warrant Officer 3 Andrew Busse, a lifetime skier who grew up skiing Terry Peak, described it as "the worst conditions imaginable." But despite the trail conditions, the opportunity was there - the opportunity to ski better than last year, to come in with the best time on the team, to hit every target at the range.

The perfect game is an elusive achievement in the biathlon, he added. The combination of rifle marksmanship and cross-country skiing requires a potent mix of endurance and skill, a unique challenge compared to other sports.

The challenge of the biathlon attracts both avid skiers and novices to the South Dakota team.

There was an air of friendly competition among the 10-person South Dakota team at the competition. Few of them were satisfied with their performance in the first race, but there was still a little bragging and a few good-natured jokes afterward.

Warrant Officer Rylan Eddington suffered a little more than the others on the second day of the races. Having come in last among the non-novice skiers on the team, he was relegated to the bright blue, one-piece, spandex ski suit from the early 1990s.

It was an eyesore of a uniform, but he wore it with good humor, which was par for the course among the South Dakota team.

Even a sudden downturn in temperature that turned the slushy course into an icy mess on the second day didn't damper the team's spirits. They raced with the same good attitude, cheered each other on, and enjoyed the same camaraderie as the day before.

Poor trail conditions or not, the team had come to ski, and they did so with enthusiasm. After all, a new day presented a new opportunity to ski the perfect round.





## SDNG, SURINAME MILITARY CONDUCT INFECTIOUS DISEASE PREVENTION EXCHANGE

Three members of the South Dakota National Guard visited the Republic of Suriname to participate in a series of subject matter expert exchanges focused on infectious disease prevention and field sanitation, Feb. 22-24.

Exchanges between South Dakota and Suriname are part of a security cooperation relationship formed in 2006 under the National Guard Bureau's State Partnership Program.

Numerous exchanges have taken place between South Dakota and Suriname to share experiences and best practices in a variety of military training and topics.

"This event provided the National Coordination Center for Disaster Response and Suriname Defense Force the opportunity to engage with subject matter experts on infectious disease mitigation and field sanitation," said Lt. Col. Orson Ward, State Partnership Program director for the SDNG.

Lt. Col. Murray Thompson, a dentist with the South Dakota Army National Guard's Medical Command and



full-time dentist in Pierre, said there was great interaction between the South Dakota and Suriname participants.

"It was fantastic and provided an excellent two-way knowledge exchange about practices and prevention techniques and common challenges with combating current diseases," said Murray, who was joined by fellow Guardsmen Sgt. 1st Class Justin Schiferl, medic, and Master Sgt. Brent Garner, public health technician.

In addition to the sessions focused on field sanitation and infectious disease prevention, participants discussed the Suriname Defense Force prevention techniques and equipment, toured the SDF Hospital, the Military Hospital, and received a presentation on pandemic procedures and personal protective equipment from the National Coordination Center for Disaster Response.

"This exchange helped develop my communication and teaching skills by utilizing unique techniques of explaining and further understanding concepts in an uncommon environment using different spoken languages," Murray said. "Further, as big and different as the world may seem, we found commonalities in much of what we do and how we operate. These commonalities helped develop friendships and trust."

# STARTING OR GROWING



from the U.S. Small Business Administration

# A VETERAN-OWNED BUSINESS

Sign up for Boots to Business Reboot, an entrepreneurship training program for veterans and their spouses

## OWNING A VETERAN-OWNED SMALL BUSINESS

Veterans have the character, discipline and skills needed to succeed as small business owners and entrepreneurs. Wondering what it takes and how you can prepare? Enroll in Boots to Business Reboot.

## ABOUT BOOTS TO BUSINESS REBOOT

Part one will be a one-day Introduction to Entrepreneurship course eligible to Veterans of all eras, Service members, including members of the National Guard and Reserves, and their spouses. This course is instructed by SBA and its partners who are skilled business advisors.

Part two is an eight-week online Foundations of Entrepreneurship course instructed by a consortium of professors and practitioners led by the Institute for Veterans and Military Families at Syracuse University.

Note: A participant must complete the one-day course to be eligible for the eight-week course.

**SATURDAY****APRIL 23, 2016****8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.****South Dakota Technology  
Business Center****2329 N. Career Avenue  
Sioux Falls, SD 57107**

Lunch and Materials will be provided.  
Attendees are asked to pre-register by  
Visiting

[www.boots2business.org/Rebootapply/](http://www.boots2business.org/Rebootapply/)

For More Information Call the South  
Dakota U.S. Small Business Administration  
District Office (605) 330-4243 or  
Email: [SouthDakota\\_DO@sba.gov](mailto:SouthDakota_DO@sba.gov)

### LOCAL PARTICIPANTS:

- South Dakota Technology Business Center
- U.S. Small Business Administration District Office
- Women Business Center - SD Center for Enterprise Opportunity;
- SCORE
- South Dakota Small Business Development Centers
- South Dakota Governor's Office of Economic Development

Boots to Business Reboot is provided nationally in cooperation with: First Data Corporation and The Marcus Foundation, Inc. and



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## RED SHIRT FRIDAY

South Dakota employers, schools and citizens are encouraged to show their support for all service members deployed overseas by participating in R.E.D. (Remember Everyone Deployed) Shirt Friday.

The South Dakota National Guard, Ellsworth Air Force Base and the S.D. Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve invites the public to participate by wearing a red shirt on all Fridays while South Dakota citizens are deployed to remember and honor all members of the military for their service to the state and nation.

The March 18 R.E.D. event is being held to highlight members of the 155th Engineer Company, currently deployed to Kuwait. Throughout the year, we will be highlighting other deployed units and individual members during future R.E.D Friday events.

"Wearing red shirts on Fridays sends a strong and unified message to our service members and families that they are not forgotten and we appreciate their sacrifice to our country," said Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, adjutant general of the SDNG. "Wearing a red shirt is a simple gesture, but the meaning behind it is significant."

Gov. Dennis Daugaard has demonstrated his support by signing a proclamation announcing all Fridays that South Dakota citizens are deployed in harm's way to be R.E.D. Shirt Friday in South Dakota.

South Dakota employers, schools and citizens are encouraged to provide additional support by:

- " Sign a Statement of Support through the ESGR to show your support (for more information about this please contact MAJ Lona Christensen, SD ESGR Program Director, at 605-737-6540)
- " Sending cards/letters to the unit or someone in the unit
- " Create a banner or video from your organization to send to the unit
- " Check in with the family of a deployed service member
- " Provide a meal for a family of a deployed service member
- " Use the hashtag #RememberEveryoneDeployed when posting your pictures to social media sites
- " Send a picture of your company to [redshirtfriday.southdakota@gmail.com](mailto:redshirtfriday.southdakota@gmail.com) and we may share your picture through our social media sites
- " Support the S.D. Veteran's Home in Hot Springs or a veteran service organization in your community

Currently, there are more than 360 Ellsworth Air Force Base Airmen and 190 South Dakota Army and Air National Guard members deployed overseas.



## CREWS BATTLE FIRE NEAR STATE VETERANS HOME

Yesterday, members of the maintenance crew at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home supported the Hot Springs Fire Department with a fire that was northeast of our new facility. Our crews assisted with cutting barbwire perimeter fencing to allow access to city fire trucks, water trucks and city heavy equipment which cut fire lines around entire burn area to contain fire from spreading.

Our special thanks to the MJFSVH staff, the Hot Springs Firemen, Police Force and maintenance crews, and the crews from U. S. Forestry and Wind Cave. Great Partners to have at a time of disaster.



## VETERANS NIGHT AT THE NCAA ELITE EIGHT

On Wednesday, March 23, the Sanford Pentagon will host the national semifinals in NCAA Division II women's basketball. That's two games (in one session) starting at 6 p.m. Here's more info about the event: [http://www.sanfordpentagon.com/news\\_article/show/604442?referrer\\_id=898473](http://www.sanfordpentagon.com/news_article/show/604442?referrer_id=898473).

The NCAA has dedicated this as Veterans Night. All Veterans and their families will be admitted to the games for **free**. There will be a flag ceremony before the game and a special Vietnam Veterans ceremony at halftime. The NCAA also will hand out commemorative challenge coins to veterans.

All the NCAA needs from us is a list of names of Veterans and family members to put on a pass list. If interested in attending, please call **Terry Vandrovec**, Enterprise Marketing Director, Orthopedics & Sports Medicine | Sanford Health Marketing (605.312.4379 CELL: 605 838 7534) or email him at [terry.vandrovec@sanfordhealth.org](mailto:terry.vandrovec@sanfordhealth.org).



## LUECK HOSTS BENEFITS FORUM

Michael Lueck, County Veterans Service Officer for Beadle and Sanborn Counties, hosted a Veterans Benefits Forum on March 11 in Huron.

Presenters for the forum were Beadle and Davison County Veterans Service Officers, American Bank and Trust, Department of Labor, Mobile Vet Centers and the VA, as well as SDDVA Field Officer Kevin Bowen, Program Manager Steve Oliva and Education Representative Ryan Fowler.

Special thanks to Michael for setting up this forum and for reaching out to his veterans.



L. to R. Ryan Fowler, Michael Lueck, Kevin Bowen and Jessica Davidson

## SDDVA ATTENDS VSO CONGRESSIONAL FORUM

SDDVA staffers Mathew Steffen (Veterans Service Officer at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home) and William Huffmon (Field Service Officer) participated in the VABHHCS Congressional Forum held last week.

Presentations addressed My VA Initiative, Veterans Choice Act, Care in the Community, comp and pen, the new operating suite, the Environmental Impact Statement, transitional and care management services, Hepatitis C treatments, and upcoming programs.

SDDVA Secretary Larry Zimmerman briefed attendees on the 2016 South Dakota Legislative Session and the new Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home.

## SDDVA PARTICIPATES IN FUNERAL PLANNING FORUM

SDDVA Field Officer Kevin Bowen and County Veterans Service Officers Terry Cousin (Tripp) and Roy Farabee (Charles Mix and Gregory) attended and presented at a funeral planning program this week in Gregory.

Bowen spoke to the group about veterans benefits, burial benefits, and survivors benefits. Other presenters addressed irrevocable burial trusts, funeral planning 101, and estate planning.





## VA ANNOUNCES COMMUNITY CARE CALL CENTER TO HELP VETERANS WITH CHOICE PROGRAM BILLING ISSUES

Veterans can now work directly with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to resolve debt collection issues resulting from inappropriate or delayed Choice Program billing. In step with MyVA's efforts to modernize the VA's customer-focused, Veteran-centered services capabilities, a Community Care Call Center has been set up for veterans experiencing adverse credit reporting or debt collection resulting from inappropriately billed Choice Program claims. Veterans experiencing these problems can call 1-877-881-7618 for assistance.

The new call center will work to resolve instances of improper veteran billing and assist community care medical providers with delayed payments. VA staff are also trained and ready to work with the medical providers to expunge adverse credit reporting on Veterans resulting from delayed payments to providers. The VA is urging veterans to continue working with their VA primary care team to obtain necessary health care services regardless of adverse credit reporting or debt collection activity.

The VA acknowledges that delayed payments and inappropriately billed claims are unacceptable and have caused stress for veterans and providers alike. The VA believes the new call center is the first step in addressing these issues. VA presented *The Plan to Consolidate Community Care* in October of 2015 that outlines additional solutions to streamline processes and improve timely provider payment.

For more details about the Veterans Choice Program and VA's progress, visit: [www.va.gov/opa/choiceact](http://www.va.gov/opa/choiceact). Veterans seeking to use the Veterans Choice Program can call 1-866-606-8198 to find out more about the program, confirm their eligibility and schedule an appointment.

## SDDVA HELPS POST 15 CELEBRATE BIRTHDAY

The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs joined in the 97th birthday celebration of the Sioux Falls American Legion Post 15.

SDDVA's State Veterans Service Officer Caitlyn Engebretson attended on behalf of the Department. Engebretson also used this opportunity to visit with veterans about the services and programs available to veterans.

Post 15 has a strong legacy of outstanding support for our youth, our veterans and their families.

Learn more about Post 15 at: <http://siouxfallslegion.org/index.php?id=1>





# Upcoming Events

Mar. 30—MJF Veterans Home Open House—1:00 pm (MT)  
Apr. 4—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am (MT)  
April 15-17—DAV Convention—Rapid City—Adoba  
Apr. 18-19—SDCMF Symposium—Black Hills State University Center—Rapid City  
Apr. 20—Veterans Council Meeting—DAV Headquarters—Sioux Falls  
Apr. 23—Boots to Business Reboot Program—SD Technology Business Center—Sioux Falls (8:30—4:00)  
May 10—SDDVA Mini Conference—Rapid City—TREA—1981 Centre Street  
May 11—SDDVA Mini Conference Pierre—American Legion Post 8—520 S. Pierre Street  
May 12—SDDVA Mini Conference—Brookings—City/County Building—520 3rd Street—Suite 300  
May 14—South Dakota Vietnam Veterans of America Meeting/Election—Post 8 American Legion—Pierre  
(election at 11:00 am (CT) and meeting at 1:00 pm (CT))  
May 14—2nd Annual PVA Poker Run and Concert—Sanford Pentagon—Sioux Falls  
Jun. 9-12—VFW State Convention—The Lodge at Deadwood  
Jun. 16-19—American Legion State Convention—Ramkota—Watertown  
Jul. 11—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am (MT)  
Jul. 23-24—Sioux Falls Air Show  
Aug. 22-25—SDDVA Annual Benefits School—Pierre Ramkota  
Oct. 3—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am (MT)



SDDVA and SDDOM offices will be closed Good Friday afternoon—March 25.

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